



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

א) האגודה הישראלית למדע בדיוני ולפנטסיה, בשיתוף עם בית אריאלה מרכז תרבות, שמחה להזמין למפגש הבא בסדרת ההרצאות ע"ש עמוס גפן. המפגש יתקיים בבית-אריאלה מרכז תרבות, שד' שאול המלך 25, תל-אביב, ביום רביעי 26.1.2005 בשעה 20:00, הכניסה חופשית

נושא ההרצאה: על דרקונים ונחשים אחרים

ההרצאה תסקור את מיתוס הדרקון בתרבויות שונות, תציג את האנטומיה של דרקונים, ותדון בתפקיד שממלאים הדרקונים בספרות הפנטסיה.

המרצה: חגית לב - חגית לב היא מסטרנטית במחלקה לגיאולוגיה ומדעי הסביבה באוניברסיטת בן-גוריון. היא חברת ועד האגודה הישראלית למדע בדיוני ולפנטסיה ומארגנת את חוג המד"ב "הבאר" בבאר-שבע.

ב) בקשה לתרומת ספרים

ספריית כפר אורנים פנתה לאגודה בבקשה לתרומת ספרי מדע בדיוני ופנטסיה, בהם יש מחסור עז וביקוש גדול. כל המעוניין לתרום ספרי מדע בדיוני, בייחוד כאלה המתאימים לנוער ולילדים, מוזמן לשלוח אותם בדואר לאגודה או לחילופין ליצור עמנו קשר כדי לתאם את איסוף הספרים. פרטים נוספים על תרומות ספרים וספריות להן תרמנו ניתן למצוא [באתר האגודה](#).

More Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

Letter to the Editor

Aharon,

First off, I WANT to keep getting **CyberCozen** each issue. And anyone who does not read it DESERVES to stop receiving it! It's a GREAT publication, and I hope you continue it for many more years.

I know this is quite late, as both the previous comment and the one to follow deal with issues brought up in the November issue of **CyberCozen**, so please forgive my tardiness and don't make me write "I will write emails in a timely fashion" five hundred times on the blackboard. (Or else I might wind up in a **Simpson's** episode. Does Bart still do that during the opening credits of the show each week? I haven't watched television in ages.)

Anyway, in your review of Clarke's **Imperial Earth**, you quote him as writing that the inspiration for the space program came from political motives "that seem ludicrous – indeed incomprehensible – to our modern minds"; i.e., the modern minds of the characters in the novel.

In this I would have to differ from Clarke's viewpoint. It is almost axiomatic among sociologists and anthropologists that technological advances have been spurred quite often and to a large degree by arms races brought on by tensions between warring factions. Even **2001: A Space Odyssey** (by Arthur Clarke as well, I might add) puts forward the assumption that the first technological advance was a weapon – if I recall correctly a bone that one proto-human picked up to use for hitting a proto-human from a rival group.

So it seems to me that since this is a generally accepted concept (correct me if I'm wrong), the basic idea that we would develop space flight as a response to political pressure should not be as alien a concept to future scientists, and probably not to the informed layperson as well, even as far removed from such concepts as we hope our descendants will be.

Incidentally, your almost incessant quotes from Terry Pratchett's *The Science of Discworld* have convinced me to buy the book already. It seems fascinating. Besides, why should it be the only Pratchett book I don't try to read? (Speaking of which, I just read his *The Carpet People* for the first time. I loved it. Would you be interested in a review? It's not a new book, after all, if I recall correctly.)

Now, on to the December issue of *CyberCozen*. You wonder why Douglas Adams refers to the radio scripts by the term "book". It's because he actually put out and had published a book called, if memory serves, *The Hitchhiker's Guide: The Radio Scripts*, which consisted of ALL versions of all the radio scripts for the entire radio series, with additional explanatory notes for each episode. This book is no longer in print, which is a shame, because I lost a copy of the first printing in the fire my family had some 8 or 9 years ago. However, I see that Amazon offers a tenth anniversary edition for 110 American dollars.

Adams was wrong, by the way, when he says that he never explained the joke behind Slartibartfast's name, because in the radio scripts book he DID explain it, and in greater detail than in the snippet you cited. If I recall correctly, he wrote in the notes to the episode in which we first meet Slartibartfast, that until he revealed the name, the typist was forced to write something like "Person #1," which he knew would annoy her. And when the name is finally revealed, she has to type that long name each time. It was, I think, based on some long-running joke or series of pranks that Adams had going with the typist. (This is somewhat different than the version you cite from *Don't Panic*.) The name Slartibartfast itself Adams created as he did because he wanted the character to be profoundly sad about something, and Adams finally decided that he should be sad about his name. He decided that the character should be sad that his name sounds "almost obscene." So he combined a few "naughty" words (farti_uckborlz, if you must know – you may insert the missing letter of your choice, if it isn't obvious), and he fooled around with the letters until the name "Slartibartfast" emerged as a result.

I was once something of an expert on Adams and his works, and even gave a presentation on that very subject sometime in the mid-90's at a now non-existent science-fiction book store in Manhattan. Of course, I've probably forgotten much of what I knew then, but I'm sure I'll always remain a fan of his work. At least until I grow up, if that ever happens.

Keep up the great work, Aharon!

Mordechai Housman

Mordechai – I would be delighted to publish your soon-to-be-written review of Pratchett's *The Carpet People*.

Aharon

**Book review: *Ringworld's Children* by Larry Niven, Orbit (2004), 271 pages
Reviewed by Doron Calo**

The **Ringworld**, probably the most renowned artificial structure in SF, is a gigantic ribbon of ultra-strong material, circling its own sun. Its diameter is similar to the one of earth's orbit; its width – one million miles. These dimensions give the thing an area equal to 3,000,000 times the area of the earth. Built eons ago, it was populated only by hominid species (which evolved wildly in various directions, filling every ecological niche available to them), game animals and exotic plants.

The first visitors from Known Space, several decades prior to the time when *Ringworld's Children* is set, were two humans, a Kzin (belonging to a species of feline warmongers) and a Puppeteer (a member of one of the cowardliest of alien races, and also one of the most manipulative). After touring the place a bit (as described in the first book, *Ringworld*) Louis Wu – one of the human members of the exploration party - had to gather all his wits to save it from total destruction wrought about by the foolishness of its own inhabitants (in the second book, *The Ringworld Engineers*). And while the third book (*The Ringworld Throne*) took a slower pace, and gave the readers a pleasant opportunity to get to know the place and its natives from up close and in person, the fourth book returns to the old – yet always fashionable – theme of Ringworld-wide catastrophe. This time, though, the threat comes from outside: the sentient species of Known Space, finally aware of the Ringworld and very keen to learn its secrets, gathered fleets of war vessels around it, and now are busying themselves mainly with trying to destroy each other. The trouble is, they try to do that with a fearsome new weapon which can easily tear the fragile

Ringworld to pieces.

This time around, it isn't Louis' job to make things right. The entities that are responsible for doing maintenance on the Ringworld are working full-time, and Louis, who feels a little redundant (and is generally tired of being told what to do by people who think they're in charge) just wants to get out.

Will he make it, while all around him super-intelligent alien beings teleport back and forth, Doomsday weapons detonate freely, the sky above is aflame with warring spaceships, and new (and old) allies seem to change loyalties by the hour?

Only Niven has the answers, and he delivers them quite generously though this breathless book. The action never seems to stop, and the scale of events is truly gigantic. I agree with those who might say that this book, like the one before it, lacks the inherent feeling of wonder that went though the first two books. But this is unavoidable – the Ringworld is no longer a giant mystery the way it was, and its inner workings (which have gradually been revealed to us during the series) lie almost completely bare; they are being used as tools in the hands of those who are dedicated to keeping the Ringworld safe. And I have to admit, it's still spectacular to see it all unfold. I think this book is a must for any Niven fan. It fills in an essential part of the Ringworld story – its origins – and gives us some hints of its future. Readers who never heard of the Ringworld before are advised not start with this book, though, and stick to the chronological order of the books in the series; without a doubt, that's the best way to experience the Ringworld.

Already the Day After Tomorrow?

CyberCozen published reviews of the sf movie *The Day After Tomorrow* in the June and July 2004 issues. While the two reviewers quarreled about the value of the movie, one thing is clear: Such scientifically-based sf movies, even if they contain serious scientific errors, arouse great public interest. If nothing else, some smart young person might change his whole life's direction on the basis of such a movie, and decide to go into the scientific field presented in the movie, just because the ideas in it excited him. And scientists are not immune to reacting to such movies. Here are quotes from a scientific article published in the major journal, *SCIENCE* (VOL 305 13 AUGUST 2004), written by Bogi Hansen, Svein Osterhus, Detlef Quadfasel, William Turrell, entitled "Already the Day After Tomorrow?":

"With even Hollywood aroused, the thermohaline circulation (THC) of the ocean has become a public theme, and not without reason. The THC helps drive the ocean currents around the globe and is important to the world's climate.... There is a possibility that the North Atlantic THC may weaken substantially during this century, and this would have unpleasant effects on our climate — not a disaster-movie ice age, but perhaps a cooling over parts of northern Europe.

"The THC is a driving mechanism for ocean currents. Cooling and ice formation at high latitudes increase the density of surface waters sufficiently to cause them to sink. Several different processes are involved, which collectively are termed "ventilation." When active, ventilation maintains a persistent supply of dense waters to the deep high-latitude oceans. At low latitudes, in contrast, vertical mixing heats the deep water and reduces its density. Together, high-latitude ventilation and low-latitude mixing build up horizontal density differences in the deep ocean, which generate forces. In the North Atlantic, these forces help drive the North Atlantic Deep Water (NADW) that supplies a large part of the deep waters of the world ocean.

"... This is the reason why people worry about a possible weakening of the THC. In the coming decades, global change via atmospheric pathways is expected to increase the freshwater supply to the Arctic. This will reduce the salinity and hence the density of surface waters, and thereby may reduce ventilation....

"A potential weakening of the North Atlantic THC would affect the deep waters of the world ocean in the long run, but would have more immediate effects on the climate in some regions.... The dense overflow waters feeding the deep Atlantic are replenished by a compensating northward flow in the upper layers. These currents bring warm saline water northward to the regions where ventilation and entrainment occur. This oceanic heat transport keeps large Arctic areas free of ice and parts of the North Atlantic several degrees warmer than they would otherwise have been...."

So, *Science* is telling us, without the North Atlantic THC some northern European areas could be a lot colder, and whole areas that are today free of ice could become filled with ice — just like the movie suggests.

Short Book Review by Aharon Sheer

The I Inside by Alan Dean Foster (1984), 299 pages. Recommended by Shmuel Kahn. I had never read an original book by Foster before, but he has written a number of movie novelizations, and I read his novelization of *Alien* (1979) in 1979. Foster's *Alien* was quite gripping, and much better than the movie (surprise!), which I did not see until years later. I found *this* book quite entertaining, although I was not at all convinced by the ending. Foster writes with a sense of humor, and his main character was someone I enjoyed knowing. This takes place in a future earth in which peace and prosperity are guaranteed for all by an all-knowing super-computer. The idea of a super-computer running the earth was commonplace in earlier sf. No one then imagined that today (in 2005), the world would actually be run by the Internet, which is controlled by Jews in Switzerland, Israel, and Silicon Valley, who direct all computer business and pleasure by swamping the Internet by non-kosher SPAM. The idea of the evil Internet actually running the world (instead of a beneficent super-computer) was not even dreamed of less than 20 years ago. The thing that bothered me by this book was how stupidly both the computer and the leading people behaved (outside of the hero, who is almost the only honest decent person in the book). They don't trust anyone, small groups of powerful people keep the most important secrets to themselves, and they lie to the public continuously. Is this what we expect two hundred years in the future? More of the same? Even assuming the omniscient omnipotent super-computer has some underlying objectives, couldn't the author have given the reader a clue? Why leave us in the dark? Instead of saying to ourselves, "Watch out, hero, there's something going on here you have to be careful about!" we find ourselves saying, "Why are all these people behaving so ridiculously?" Personally, I think the movie (if they were ever to make it) would be better, but, to be fair, I enjoyed the book.

Quote of the Month:

"Describing someone's ideas as 'mere speculation' is often considered insulting. This is unfortunate. As the English biologist Peter Medawar has noted, 'An imaginative concept of what *might* be true is the starting point of all great discoveries in science.' Ironically, this is sometimes true even when the speculation turns out to be wrong. Listen to Charles Darwin: 'False facts are highly injurious to the progress of science for they often endure long; but false hypotheses do little harm, as everyone takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness; and when this is done, one path toward error is closed and the road to truth is often at the same time opened.'"

From *Phantoms in the Brain* (1998) by V.S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee, p. xvi

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